

Testimony HB 253: Tom Heyes, 24 N Coyote Drive, West Yellowstone, MT 59758

I am here to support HB 253. I have lived in West Yellowstone since 1993, and resided on Horse Butte since 1998. I have watch bison policies evolve over that time. I have seen helicopters hovering over my house during DOL hazing operations and objected many times to the current government policies toward t he bison, to the fact that the DOL can come on my property without my permission, and to the lack of any scientific rationale in the creation of the current policy.

I believe this bill will be the vehicle that will start a process to achieve a bison plan based on sound science, not political scare tactics.

I am astounded that the Stockman's Association supports the current bison policy. Since bison do carry brucellosis, they have become the chosen government scapegoat for the spread of the disease. The current bison plan has proven to be a failure.

- Within the last 10 years, in Wyoming, Idaho and Montana the only transmission of brucellosis from the wild to cattle has been from elk.
- this has resulted in the loss of contaminated herds and the Brucellosis free status for Montana.
- there is a zero tolerance policy for bison that move out of Yellowstone National Park.
- there is no policy for the elk.
- the current Interagency Management Plan is starting to look to elk as carriers of brucellosis.
- the emphasis of the current plan is "inoculating" the wildlife that carry the disease.
- the current interagency plan calls for bison to be permitted on the Horse Butte area.
- yet the Gallatin National Forest supervisor recently approved another 10 year plan to allow a bison capture facility on Horse Butte.

Pardon me if I am confused by the above. It seems to me that rationality has totally disappeared from the current process.

HB 253 defines bison as "valued, native wildlife", I doubt that many would object to that wording. The bison is an icon for the west .

This bill will protect my property rights.

I believe all Montanans, hunters, ranchers, property owners, other citizens and tourists will be better served by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks regaining the authority to manage bison. The Department of livestock has been proven ineffectual with their handling of the issue.

The cattle industry would be better served if the money expended under the current plans had been spent on a dependable brucellosis vaccine for cattle.

With luck this bill will be a start to the return of reputable science to the bison decision making process. Thank you.

